

Research and Academic Partner Constituent Group (RAPCG)
of the General Assembly of Partners
Statement

Delivered by Enrique R. Silva, Co-Chair of the RAPCG and Senior Research Associate, Latin
America and Caribbean Program, Lincoln Institute of Land Policy,
at the Habitat III Informal Hearings with Stakeholders, United Nations Headquarters,
New York City, New York, USA

6 June 2016

Madame Co-Chair, Distinguished Delegates and Representatives of the Member States, Fellow Partners, the members of the **Research and Academic Partner Constituent Group** of the General Assembly of Partners appreciate the opportunity to participate in this panel on key recommendations for the New Urban Agenda.

It is my honor to represent over 150 academics and researchers and 127 institutions from Africa, Asia, Europe, North, Central, and South America, as well as Australia. Each one of our members is also part of larger networks of academic associations and research consortia, such as the International Council for Science (ICSU). The Research and Academic Partner Constituent Group thus brings to bear a critical mass of the world's top academics, researchers and centers of higher learning on Habitat III and the New Urban Agenda.

Academics and researchers are key stakeholders in the New Urban Agenda. We are delighted that the zero draft recognizes this from the outset in paragraph 1. Today, we highlight the importance of several sections and paragraphs in the zero draft that we hope remain and are improved upon in the New Urban Agenda. These sections are "Stakeholder Engagement Framework", "Urban Planning and Management", "Financial Management", and most specifically, the paragraphs under the sections "Science, technology, innovation and capacity-development, and paragraph 171 under "Follow-up and Review." To the extent possible, we would like to see specific mentions of the contributions the academic and research community

can make under each reference to knowledge-generation, data gathering, metrics design and use, as well as monitoring and evaluation.

I want to be more specific about our role and contributions to the New Urban Agenda and its implementation.

Academics and researchers from all disciplines and learning traditions advocate for the use of sound research methods and support the co-production of knowledge to better inform policymaking and strengthen the capacity of government agencies to serve their constituents.

The academic and research community will also ensure that the New Urban Agenda contain meaningful, actionable targets, and that sound data and metrics will be generated in a participatory and inclusive manner such that they inspire commitment, innovation and effective policies for sustainable human settlements.

The academic and research community will also monitor the development, management and governance of human settlements worldwide.

To this end, we support the General Assembly of Partners proposed:

- International multi-stakeholder “knowledge platform” for sustainable urbanization (IMPSU),
- the Partners’ Lab for Urban Sustainability [PLUS], and
- the Partners’ Dashboard for Sustainable Urbanization [PDSU], as ongoing legacies of Habitat III.

The implementation plan’s goals cover diverse aspects of urbanization and urbanizing areas. However, to be actionable, it must promote the adoption of, or indeed specify, metrics and accountability mechanisms for each of its goals.

As important, the New Urban Agenda should address more forcefully the need to narrow the gap between research and theory development and impactful practical applications, and to avoid silo-like approaches to complex issues. To this end, many of our constituent group

members have honed ways to translate theory and multi-disciplinary research into practical, accessible capacity building modules for practitioners and public sector agencies in a range of country and urban contexts.

I am particularly proud to represent an institute that has generated applied research on land value increments and then taken that research and basic principles of urban economics to help Latin American national and municipal governments finance major infrastructure and planning initiatives.

We encourage you to consider building in language that promotes new and effective multi-level and collaborative systems for co-production of knowledge, translation and dissemination. This includes:

- greater awareness of and incentives for inter and trans-disciplinary approaches in the natural and social sciences,
- a greater focus on inter and trans-disciplinary and applied education and research at all levels,
- capacity development initiatives that make basic theories and knowledge of urban development accessible and useful for practitioners,
- more effective mechanisms for active policy dialogue between the academic and research community and policymakers,
- a commitment to address the affordability and sustainability of research endeavors in the short, medium and long-term,
- a greater focus on critical evaluation of urban policies and 'solutions' across political, cultural and sector boundaries, as well as
- the effective inclusion of local and indigenous knowledge in both research and policy processes.

We also emphasize the strategic importance of an ongoing metropolitan, local, and peri-urban data-collection system to form a sound evidence base for advancing and monitoring the implementation of the agenda. The data challenges represented in the agenda should not be underestimated. Data collection systems at the metropolitan and local scale must be well-defined and methodologically sound. Yet, it is important to ensure that it is feasible for all

member-states to collect disaggregated (demographic, territorial) data at subnational levels, and to do so in a manner that engages local communities and takes advantage of a range of tools and technologies.

We encourage UN-Habitat to continue expanding its collaborative efforts to build global databases that will promote greater transparency and government capacity to assess and fund sustainable urban development.

Finally, on a broader level, we want to underscore that the “science of cities” or human settlements integrates complex adaptive systems: systems of production and consumption, water, labor, food energy, transport, health, and education. Therefore, good urban planning and governance will need to be informed by systems thinking or a systems approach, and requires sustainable sources of finance. We call for this point to be highlighted upfront in the Quito Declaration and the Quito Implementation Plan.

On behalf of the academic and research community, I thank you for your attention and your commitment and hard work on the preparatory process for Habitat III.